

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 IO-13 /089 W
-----085223 020628Z /65

P R 011125Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6112
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2098

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: POLITICAL ACTIVITY BANNED UNTIL MARCH 31: THE MLA STIFFENS

REF: A) KARACHI 1028 (NOTAL) B) KARACHI 1038 (NOTAL)
C) ISLAMABAD 2040 D) ISLAMABAD 1995

1. THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION (MLA) FEBRUARY 28 ISSUED
MARTIAL LAW ORDER (MLO) #33 WHICH BANS POLITICAL ACTIVITY
UNTIL MARCH 31, 1978, VIOLATION OF THE ORDER IS PUNISHABLE
BY UP TO SEVEN YEARS "RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT", FINES, AND/OR
LASHES. WHILE THE ORDER'S DEFINITION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY
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RUNS THE FULL GAMUT (ORGANIZING, FINANCING, PUBLICATIONS),
IT EXEMPTS "BONA FIDE" ACTIVITY CONNECTED WITH TRADE
UNIONS, STUDENT UNIONS, AND BAR COUNCILS. THE
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION HAS CALLED A BRIEFING FOR LATE
MARCH 1 TO FURTHER EXPLAIN THE ORDER AND ITS PARTICULAR
IMPLICATIONS FOR NEWSMEN.

2. URDU DAILY JANG MARCH 1 CARRIES AN ARTICLE BASED UPON AN INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) GENERAL ZIA. THE CMLA NOTES THAT HE STILL HOPES TO HOLD ELECTIONS 60 DAYS AFTER THE DISQUALIFICATION TRIBUNALS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR WORK. (REFTEL C). ZIA ADDED THAT WHILE HE HAD ONCE BEEN CONVINCED THAT THE "PROCESS OF ACCOUNTABILITY" COULD BE COMPLETED IN 6 MONTHS, HE NOW "WOULDN'T KNOW HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE". ZIA SAID HE PLANS TO TELL THE NATION SOON WHAT HE MEANS BY "POSITIVE RESULTS" AS AN ELECTION PRECONDITION (REFTEL D), AND PROMISED THAT A WHITE PAPER ON THE "MISDEEDS" OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ISSUED SOMETIME IN MARCH.

3. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, PRO-PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY (PPP) URDU DAILY MUSAWAAT REPORTS MARCH 1 THAT MUALANA KAUSER NIAZI, LEADER OF THE "RIGHT-WING" IN THE PPP AND A VETERAN POLITICAL SCRAMBER, HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY FOR FIVE YEARS. THE EXPULSION WAS REPORTEDLY ORDERED BY ACTING PPP CHAIRMAN (SIC) BEGUM BHUTTO. THE PLESS REPORTS ALSO THAT BEGUM BHUTTO, WIFE OF THE FORMER PM, HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN LAHORE FOR 10 DAYS.

4. COMMENT: MLO 33 APPEARS TO ANTICIPATE A VERDICT IN THE BHUTTO TRIAL, WHICH IS EXPECTED SOON. ATTORNEY GENERAL PIRZADA TOLD KARACHI CONGEN FEBRUARY 28 THAT HE
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FORECAST THE VERDICT ABOUT MARCH 10-12, AND THAT SECURITY FORCES HAD BEEN ALERTED FOR POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT. THE ORDER IS ALSO PART OF THE HARDER LINE LATELY TAKEN BY THE MLA. RECENT DISTURBANCES IN SIND, COMBINED WITH THE MLA'S APPARENT IMPULSE TO "DIG IN" (REFTEL D), HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE MILITARY'S TOUGHER ATTITUDE TOWARD OPEN POLITICKING. HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MARTIAL LAW, POLITICAL REPRESSION, RESOLUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ISLAMA02098
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780095-0245
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803120/aaaadyip.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 86ccd1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KARACHI 1028, 78 KARACHI 1038
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3159863
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL ACTIVITY BANNED UNTIL MARCH 31: THE MLA STIFFENS
TAGS: PINT, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/86ccd1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014